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THE HEBREW PENTAMETER.

BY PROF. C. A. BRIGGS, D. D.,

Union Theological Seminary, New York City.

The Hebrew pentameter is measured by five beats of the rhythmical accent. The caesura usually comes after the third beat; but not infrequently after the second, so as to give a variation to the movement. The greater portion of Hebrew poetry is in the trimeter movement, the greater portion of the remainder is pentameter. The tetrameters and hexameters are less numerous.

The pentameter line is often treated as if it was composed of two lines in parallelism. But the second half of the pentameter line is not in such marked parallelism with the first as the second line of a trimeter poem. It is rather supplementary to the first half, even when parallelism appears.

1) The first specimen of the pentameter that we shall give is the alphabetical dirge contained in Lamentations III. This dirge has twenty-two strophes in which the initial letter of the strophe begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet in the order from א to ת. But the alphabetical structure is not confined to the initial letters of the strophes. Each strophe contains three lines and each line begins with the characteristic letter of the strophe. We shall give four of these strophes as specimens of the twenty-two. Bickell makes these lines of twelve syllables in accordance with his theory of the structure of Hebrew verse. In general, his lines of twelve syllables correspond with our pentameter.

א

אני-הגבר ראה עני | בשבט עברתי
אותי נהג | וילך חשך ולא-אור
אך-בי ישב יהפך | ידו כל-היום

ב

בלה בשרי ועורי | שבר עצמותי
בנה עלי | ויקף ראש ותלאה
במחשכים חושיבני | כמתי עולם

ג

גדר בעדי ולא-אצא | הכביר נחשתי
גם-כי אזעק ואישוע | שתם תפלתי
גדר דרכי בגזית | נתיבותי עוה

ד

דב ארב הוא-לי | אריה במסתרים
דרכי סורר ופישחני | שמני שומם
דרך קשתנו | ויציבני כמטרא לחץ

The only changes in the Massoretic text are insertions of Maqqeph between **הוא-לי** (line 1); **גם-כי** (line 8); **לא-אצא** (line 7); **אך-בי** (line 3); **אני-הגבר** (line 10), all of which changes are in accordance with good usage. The lines have the caesura after the third beat of the accent, except in lines 2 and 6; the latter being the only tetrameter line among the twelve. We have seen that there are occasional dimeter lines among the trimeters, and trimeter lines among the tetrameters; so we are not surprised to find a tetrameter among these pentameters.

It will be seen that the parallelism is between the pentameter lines rather than between the two parts of the pentameters; the second half of the pentameter gives a supplementary statement. In some cases this is akin to parallelism, as in lines 4 and 9; but it is noteworthy that in the latter the verb is omitted, showing its dependence upon the first half of the line, and in the former it is really complementary, in that the treatment of the bones is added to the flesh and skin.

2) The second specimen that we shall give is two strophes of the great alphabetical poem in praise of the Divine Word, Psalm CXIX. We have here twenty-two strophes, and each strophe is composed of 8 lines, and each line of the strophe begins with the characteristic letter of the strophe. The pentameter movement is clear, and the lines are distinctly marked off by the letters of the alphabet. Bickell also regards the lines of this poem as composed of twelve syllables.

א

אשרי תמימי-דרך | ההלכים בתורת יהוה
אשרי נצרי עדתיו | בכל-לב ידרשוהו
אף לא-פעלו עולה | בדרכיו הלכו

אתה צויתה פקדיך | לשמר מאד
 אחלי יכנו דרכי | לשמר חקיך
 אז לא-אבוש | בהביטי אל-כל מצותיך
 אורך ביישר-לבב | בלמדי משפטי צדקך
 את-חקיך אשמר | אל תעזבני עד-מאד

ב

במה יזכה-נער את-ארחו | לשמר כדרכך
 בכל-לבי דרשתיך | אל תשגני ממצותיך
 בלבי צפנתי אמרתך | למען לא-אחטא-לך
 ברוך אתה יהוה | למדני חקיך
 בשפתי ספרתי | כל משפטי פיך
 בדרך ערותיך ששתי | כעל כל-הון
 בפקודיך אשיחה | ואביטה ארחתיך
 בחקתיך אשתעשע | לא אשכח דברך

We remove the Maqqeph in א, line 6, between אל-כל and מצותך, which has made it a very long word of six syllables; between אל and תעזבני in א, line 8; between אל and תשגני in ב, line 2, and between משפטי and פיך in ב, line 5. We insert Maqqeph between ביישר-לבב in א, line 7, and לא-אחטא-לך in ב, line 3, in both cases having no more than five syllables. There is but a single tetrameter line in the sixteen, namely, in ב, line 7.

3) We shall now give a pentameter prayer with a refrain. This prayer is given in Jonah II. It has two strophes of six lines each; closing with אל-היכל קרשך, and a broken strophe of three lines without a refrain. It seems that the author of Jonah used an older poem, or so much of it as suited his purpose, leaving the third strophe unfinished.

I.

קראתי מצרה-לי | אל יהוה ויענני
 מבטן שאול שועתי | שמעת קולי
 ותשליכני מצולה בלבב-ימים | ונהר יסבבני
 כל משבריך וגליך | עלי עברו
 ואני אמרתי | נגרשתי מנגד עיניך
 אך אוסיף להביט | אל-היכל קרשך

II.

אפפוני מים עד-נפש | תהום יסבבני
 סוף חבוש לראשי | לקצבי הרים
 ירדתי הארץ | ברחיה בעדי לעולם

ותעל משחת חיי | יהוה אלהי
בהתעטף עלי נפשי | את-יהוה זכרתי
ותבוא אליך תפלתי | אל-היכל קדשך

III.

משמרים הבלי שוא | חסדם יעזבו
ואני בקול תורה | אזבחה לך
אשר נדרתי אשלמה | ישועתה ליהוה

There are three pentameter distichs, the first distich has synonymous parallelisms, the second progressive parallelisms, and the third antithetical parallelism. The caesura is usually after the third beat, but in the fifth line it is after the second beat.

In the second strophe the Massorites made an unfortunate separation of verses 6 and 7. **לקצרי הרים** goes with the previous line as its complement, making the first distich of this strophe synonymous. The second distich then begins with **ידרתי** and is antithetical, the second line begins with **ותעל**. The closing distich is synonymous.

With this change we have again a symmetrical strophe of six pentameter lines exactly like its mate with the refrain. We have found no occasion to change the Massoretic Maqqephhs thus far in this piece. But in the fragment of the third strophe we remove the Maqqephhs between **הבלי** and **שוא** (line 1) and between **אזבחה** and **לך**. The latter must be removed on account of the caesura, which is immediately before the verb; the former might remain and give us a tetrameter line.

4) The Pilgrim Psalms CXX.-CXXXIV. are all pentameters, with the single exception of the long CXXXII., which is a trimeter that in other respects seems out of place in this little collection. They are fine specimens of pentameters, and the study of the poetical structure aids in the interpretation.

We have seen that Bickell's lines of twelve syllables correspond in general with our pentameters. It is interesting to note that he makes all these Pilgrim Psalms, except CXXXII., of the measure of seven and five, that is, seven syllables in the first line, five in the second, seven in the third and five in the fourth, and so on. The only difference from his metre of twelve syllables is in breaking the line in two; there is no difference in the sum total of syllables. In this Bickell is mistaken, the poems are really the same in their structure as those already considered.

Psalm CXX.

אל-יהוה בצרתה לי | קראתי ויענני
יהוה הצילה נפשי | משפת-שקר מלשון-רמיה
מה-יתן לך | ומה-יסוף לך לשון-רמיה

חצי גבור שנונים | עם-גחלי רתמים
 אויה-לי כי-גרתִי משך | שכנתי עם-אהלי-קדר
 רבת שכנה-לה נפשי | עם-שונא שלום
 אני שלום | וכי-אדבר המה למלחמה

This Psalm gives eight pentameter lines. We notice one of the features of the Pilgrim Psalm, the repetition of certain catch-words, e. g., מלשון רמיה, שכן, and שלום making a sort of marching rhythm.

Psalm CXXI.

אישא עיני אל-ההרים | מאין-יבא עזרי
 עזרי מעם-יהוה | עשה שמים וארץ
 אל-יתן למוט רגלך | אל-ינום שמרך
 הנה לא-ינום ולא-יִישן | שומר ישראל
 יהוה שמרך | יהוה צלך על-ידימינך
 יומם השמש לא-יככה | וירח בלילה
 יהוה ישמרך מכל-רע | ישמר את-נפשך
 יהוה ישמר-צאתך ובואך | מעתה ועד-עולם

These eight lines are pentameters. They carry the marching rhythm further than the previous psalm. עזרי of the first line reappears in the second, making this synonymous distich complete in itself. The ינום of line 3 is taken up in line 4, and the שמר of line 4 appears in line 5 and becomes the catch-word of the rest of the poem, in lines 7 and 8. It is possible that יהוה of the last line arose by the copyist's eye catching the first word of the upper line. But the Mas-sorites insert a Maqqeph between ישמר-צאתך and there is no reason, from the rhythm, why it should be omitted.

Psalm CXXII.

שמחתי באמרים לי | בית-יהוה נלך
 עמדות היו רגלינו | בשערך ירושלם
 ירושלם הבנויה | כעיר שחברה-לה יחרו
 יששם עלו שבטים | שבטי יה
 עדות לישראל | להודות לשם יהוה
 כי-שמה כסאות למשפט | כסאות לבית-דוד
 שאלו שלום ירשלים | ישליו אהביך
 יהי שלום בחילך | שלוה בארמנותיך
 למען-אחי ורעי | אדברה-נא שלום בך
 למען בית-יהוה אלהינו | אבקשה טוב-לך

This poem of ten lines is composed throughout of pentameter lines. Only one emendation is necessary. We agree with Bickell in removing **ישבו** from line 6 before **כסאות**. It has come in from the margin, or the mind of the scribe. The line is sufficiently clear without it, and it disturbs the rhythm. We notice the catch-words **ירושלם** and **שלום**.

Psalm CXXIII.

אלֶּךְ נִשְׁאַתִּי אֶת-עֵינִי | הִישְׁבִּי בַשָּׁמַיִם
הִנֵּה כְעֵינִי עֹבְדִים | אֶל-יֵד אֲרוֹנֵיהֶם
כְּעֵינִי שִׁפְחָה | אֶל-יֵד גְּבֵרֶתָהּ
כֹּן-עֵינֵינוּ | אֶל-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ | עַד שִׁיחַנְנוּ
חֲנֹנוּ חֲנֹנוּ | כִּי-רַב שִׁבְעֵנוּ בּוֹ
רַבַּת שִׁבְעָה לָּהּ | נִפְשָׁנוּ הִלְעֵג
לַעֲגֹ הַשְׁאֲנָנִים | הַבּוֹ לִגְּאִי יוֹנָם

The first and second lines are evidently pentameters. The third line is a tetrameter as it stands. It is probable that **הנה** has been rubbed off at the beginning. The fourth line is a pentameter. **כן** should be combined with **עֵינֵינוּ** by a Maqqeph. This gives us a synonymous tetrastich. In the fifth line the Massoretic **יהוה** has slipped in, as often elsewhere in Hebrew literature; we strike it out therefore. The last verse is difficult. The **קרי** very properly reads **לִגְאִי יוֹנָם** which gives us a pentameter for the last line, but leaves us with a trimeter in the previous line. **הִלְעֵג** is not good grammar before **הַשְׁאֲנָנִים**. It seems likely that a second **לַעֲגֹ**, a proper construct without the article was originally there, and that it was omitted by a copyist's mistake. The omission of repeated words is as common in copying as the repetition of words by mistake. If we restore it, we remove the fault of grammar, give the verb an object in the same line; make it a pentameter line like all the others in the poem, and give another example of the repetition of a catch-word. The marching rhythm then comes complete and is carried on from the beginning to the end, in **לַעֲגֹ**, **חֲנֹנוּ**, **שִׁבְעָה** and **עֵינֵינוּ**. The closing tristich is a fine example of progressive parallelism, in which the first half of the second line is synonymous with the last half of the first, and the second half is progressive thereto. The first half of the third line is synonymous with the second half of the second line, and the second half of the third line is synonymous with the second half of the first line. We have not space for all of the Pilgrim Psalms, and accordingly will select a few others.

Psalm CXXV.

הַבְּטַחִים בַּיהוָה | כְּהָר צִיּוֹן לֹא-יִמּוֹט
שְׁלֹמֹם יֵשֶׁב יְרוּשָׁלַם | הָרִים סְבִיבֶיהָ

ויהוה סביב לעמו | מעתה ועד-עולם
 כִּי-לֹא-יִנּוּחַ שֶׁבֶט הַרְשָׁע | עַל-גּוֹרֵל הַצְדִּיקִים
 לִמְעַן לֹא-יִשְׁלַחוּ הַצְדִּיקִים | בַּעֲוֹלָתָהּ יְדִיהֶם
 הַטִּיבָה יְהוָה לטוֹבִים | וְלִישָׁרִים בִּלְבוֹתָם
 וְהַמָּטִים עֵקֶלְקֻלוֹתָם | יוֹלִיכֶם יְהוָה אֶת-פַּעֲלֵי-הָאוֹן
 שְׁלוֹם עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל

The Massorites have divided verses 1 and 2 unfortunately. **לְעוֹלָם יֵשֶׁב** goes with **יְרוּשָׁלַם**, and thus we have a fine specimen of introverted parallelism with the third line, in which the first half of the second line is synonymous with the second half of the third, as the second half of the first line with the first half of the third, and the three lines make a tristich. We next have a progressive distich, which is followed by an antithetical distich and a trimeter refrain.

Psalm CXXXVI.

בָּשׁוּב יְהוָה אֶת-שְׁבִית-צִיּוֹן | הֵייוּ כַחֲלָמִים
 אֲדִימָלָא שְׁחוֹק פִּינוּ | וְלִשְׁוֹנָנוּ רִנָּה
 אֲזִי-אִמְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם | הַגְדִּיל לַעֲשׂוֹת עִם-אֱלֹהֵי
 הַגְדִּיל לַעֲשׂוֹת עִמָּנוּ | הֵייוּ שְׂמֵחִים
 שׁוֹבָה יְהוָה אֶת-שְׁבִיתָנוּ | כַּאֲפִיקִים בְּנִגַב
 הַזֹּרְעִים בְּרִמְעָה | בְּרִנָּה יִקְצְרוּ
 הַלֹּךְ יֵלֶךְ וּבִכָּה | נִשָּׂא מִשַּׁךְ-הַזֹּרֵעַ
 בָּא יָבֵא בְּרִנָּה | נִשָּׂא אֶלְמָתִי

The divine name **יְהוָה**, by scribal error, appears in the Massoretic text of lines 3 and 4 with **הַגְדִּיל**, where it was unnecessary, as the subject of the verb is clear from the context. We have stricken it out. We also follow the **קרי** in line 5, reading **שְׁבִיתָנוּ**. We correct the scribal blunder of line 1, and read **שְׁבִית** for the **שִׁבִּית** which has arisen by transposition of the letters **י** and **ב**. The changes of the Maqqeph can hardly be objected to with propriety. They are made to accord with good usage. The removal of a Massoretic Maqqeph between **בָּא** and **יָבֵא** in the last line makes it more harmonious with **הַלֹּךְ יֵלֶךְ** of the previous line. This Psalm is composed of two tetrastichs; they are both of great beauty. The first is an example of introverted parallelism. The first and fourth lines are synonymous throughout. The second line is synonymous with the last half of the first and fourth lines; and the third line is synonymous with the first half of these lines. The second tetrastich is entirely different in structure. The second line is progressive to the first; and is of the tetrameter movement in order to bring out a strong antithesis between its two equal members.

This antithesis then expands in the antithetical lines that follow, where the third line is synonymous with the first half of the second, and the fourth line with its second half.

Psalm CXXX.

ממעמקים קראתיך | אדני שמעה בקולי
 תהיינה אזניך קשבות | לקול תחנוני
 אם-עונות תשמר-יה | אדני מי יעמד
 כי עמך הסליחה | למען תורא
 קויתי יהוה | קותה נפשי ולדברו
 הוחלתי נפשי לאדני | משמרים לבקר
 שמרים לבקר | יחל ישראל אל-יהוה
 כי-עם-יהוה החסד | והרבה עמו פדות
 והוא יפרה את-ישראל | מכל עונותיו

The Massoretic text obscures the movement in several places. יהוה slipped into the first line and was the occasion of an incorrect division of the verses. We agree with Bickell and strike it out. Then we have a distich of pentameters in which there is introverted parallelism between the halves of the lines. The second distich is antithetical. In the three lines that follow, the Massoretic accentuation and verse divisions destroy the poetry altogether. We therefore discard them and follow the LXX., and thereby gain not only the pentameter but also a better parallelism. As the first line begins with קויתי, the sixth line begins with its synonymous הוחלתי. The transition from the first person of the verb to נפשי is in accordance with the change from קולי to אקוא in Psalm III. 5. We have, moreover, another parallelism between לאדני and לדברו making the first half of the sixth line synonymous with the second half of the fifth line. The seventh line begins with שמרים לבקר, which is another example of the marching movement so common in these Psalms, and it results in another case of introverted parallelism between these two lines. These three lines are accordingly bound together in synonymous parallelism. The eighth line is now synonymous with the fourth, and the ninth line is in strong antithesis with the third; so that our Psalm is really composed of an opening distich of prayer for redemption; and a concluding heptastich of great beauty setting forth the assurance of the redemption of Israel.

5) We shall now give the dirge of Babylon (Isa. XLVII), which is one of the finest pieces in the Old Testament.

I.

רדי ושבי על-עפר | בתולת בת-בבל
 שבי לארץ אין-כסא | בת כשרים

כִּי־לֹא תוֹסִיפִי יִקְרְאוּ־לְךָ | רַכָּה וְעִנְגָה
 קַח־י רַחִים וְטַחֲנִי־קֶמַח | גְּלִי צִמְתָּךְ
 חֲשָׁפִי שְׁבֵל גְּלִי־שׁוֹק | עֲבֵרִי נִהְרֹת
 תִּגַּל עֲרוּתְךָ | גַּם תִּרְאֶה הִרְפַּתְךָ
 נִקֵּם אֶקַּח | וְלֹא אֶפְגַּע אֶדָם

This strophe is composed of a tristich of two synonymous lines with third progressive thereto; and a tetrastich of three synonymous lines with the fourth progressive to it. Lines 3 and 4 might be taken as three tetrastichs, but they are better as we have given them, the first of them referring to bondage, the second to exile.

II.

שְׁבִי דוֹמֶם וּבְאִי־בַחֲשָׁן | בֵּת כִּשְׂרִים
 כִּי־לֹא תוֹסִיפִי יִקְרְאוּ־לְךָ | גְּבֵרֶת מַמְלָכוֹת
 קִצְפָּתִי עַל עַמִּי | חֲלַלְתִּי נַחֲלָתִי
 וְאַתָּנָם בִּידֶךָ | לֹא־שָׁמַת לָהֶם רַחֲמִים
 עַל זֶקֶן הַכְּבֵדָת | עַלֶּךָ מֵאֵד
 וְתֹאמְרִי לַעֲלוֹם אֵהִיָּה | גְּבֵרֶת עַד
 לֹא־שָׁמַת אֱלֹה עַל־לִבְךָ | לֹא־זָכַרְתָּ אַחֲרִיתָהּ

I agree with Eichhorn and Cheyne that the line גָּאֲלֵנוּ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ has come in from the margin as a scribal exclamation of praise. It disturbs the thought of the piece as well as the structure of the strophe. I also agree with Cheyne in separating עַד from שָׁמַת, where it gives no good sense, and in attaching it to גְּבֵרֶת in line 6.

This strophe begins with an imperative, and its first and second lines resemble the second and third lines of the previous strophe, so that we have a progressive distich. A progressive tristich takes up the middle of the strophe, and it concludes with a synonymous distich.

III.

וַעֲתָה שְׁמַע־זֹאת עֲדִינָה | הִישָׁבַת לִבְטַח
 הָאִמְרָה בִּלְבָבָהּ | אֲנִי וְאֶפְסִי עוֹד
 לֹא־אֲשַׁב אֶלְמִנָּה | וְלֹא אֶדַּע שְׁכוֹל
 וְתִבְאֲנָה לְךָ שְׁתִּי־אֱלֹה | רִגַּע בְּיוֹם אֶחָד
 שְׁכוֹל וְאַלְמָן | כְּתָמָם בָּאוּ עֲלֶיךָ
 בָּרַב כְּשָׁפִיךְ | בַּעֲצַמַת הַבְּרִיךְ מֵאֵד
 וְתִבְטַח־י בְּרַעַתְךָ | אִמְרַת אֵין רָאִנִּי

This strophe also begins with an imperative, and **הִישַׁבַּת לִבָּטָח** corresponds with **בַּת-בְּנֵי** and **בַּת בְּשָׂרִים** of the previous strophes, **לִבָּטָח** of the first line reappears in **וּתְבַטְחִי** of the last line. The strophe is a heptastich in which there is a sort of introverted parallelism about the fourth line as a centre.

IV.

(דעי) חכמתך ודעתך | היא שובבתך
 ותאמרי בלבך | אני ואפסי עוד
 ובא עליך רעה | לא-תדעי שחרה
 ותפל עליך הוה | לא-תוכלי כפרה
 ותבא עליך פתאם | שאה לא-תדעי
 עמדי-נא בחברך וברב-כשפיך | באשר-יגעת מנעורך
 אולי תוכלי הועיל | נלאית ברב-עצתך

We insert **דעי** at the beginning in accordance with the LXX. and the usage of the poet to begin each strophe with an imperative or jussive. We follow the LXX. and Arabic Versions, and omit the Massoretic **אולי תערוצי** from the last line. The sixth line is quite long. It is possible that **ברב כשפיך** is a marginal insertion from line 6 of the previous strophe, with which it is parallel. The opening distich of this strophe corresponds with that of the previous strophe, the second line being the same with the exception of the substitution of **ן** with **Im-**perfect for the Participle with the article, and the first lines are synonymous. We next have a synonymous tristich which corresponds with lines 4 and 5 of the previous strophe. The strophe ends with a synonymous distich which also corresponds with the last distich of the previous strophe. The entire strophe is accordingly synonymous with the previous strophe.

V.

יעמדו-נא ויושיעך | הברי-שמים החזים בכוכבים
 מוריעים לחדשים | מאשר יבאו עליך
 הנה היו בקש | איש שרפתם
 ולא יצילו את-נפשם | מיד להבה
 אין-גחלת לחמם | אור לשבת נגרו
 כן-היו-לך איש יגעת | סחרך מנעורך
 איש לעברו תעו | אין מושיעך

This strophe begins with a jussive on account of its reference to the magicians. The **ויושיעך** of the first line is the catch-word of the strophe that reappears in **אין מושיעך** of the last line. The strophe as a whole is progress-

ive to the previous pair of strophes. The opening distich has synonymous parallelism between the second member of the first line and the first member of the second, but the second member of the second line is progressive to the first member of the first line. The middle of the strophe is a synonymous tristich. The strophe comes to an end with a progressive distich.

We have selected the above specimens of the pentameter, not only to show the pentameter movement where it is evident in the alphabetical poems, but also in order to show the help the study of poetry gives to the criticism of the text, and so an understanding of the parallelism upon which the interpretation depends.

Our next paper will treat of the Hebrew Hexameter.